

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION SINCE 1877

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## Page: Pray for healing of country

**NASHVILLE (BP and local reports)** — The responsibility of healing the nation rests with Christians in prayer, said Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee President Frank Page at a May 2 National Day of Prayer breakfast in Nashville.

U.S. President Barack Obama issued a National Day of Prayer proclamation on May 1, but as has been the Obama administration's custom, The White House did not host a National Day of Prayer event.

The National Day of Prayer was observed in several locations around Mississippi, including at the State Capitol in Jackson where Kay Cassibry, executive director of the Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union, and Dan Modisett, a member of Morrison Heights Church in Clinton, offered prayers.

"The fault for what's happening is not the White House, the courthouse, the statehouse, the schoolhouse — it's the church house," Page told the 300 gathered at the Renaissance Hotel. "That's where the problem is."

Page until recently served as interim pastor of First Church Jackson. Knee replacement surgery and the attendant recuperation period in Nashville did not allow him to continue as interim pastor.

Page delicately told the audience of the 2010 suicide of one of his three daughters and offered the apostle Paul's example of earnest prayer in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 as a Christian's first resort when trouble comes.

"The first reaction ought to be 'Father, we need You,'" Page said. "Trouble comes to everybody. It may not be a suicide, but trouble comes. Burdens are great and some of you in this place today are burdened deeply and you may have come in with a great smile and a wonderful look on your face, but there's deep hurt in this place today."

SEE PRAY on p. 6



PAGE



TELSA DEBERRY

## Overcoming obstacles, hurdles

## Holly Springs church plant taking on city

By Tony Martin  
Associate Editor

Apparently, no one told Telsa DeBerry that you can't fight City Hall. The pastor of Opulent Life Church in Holly Springs is doing just that — and winning.

Part One of  
a Two-Part  
Series

From the  
beginning,  
Opulent Life

Church has had to deal with significant obstacles thrown in their path by the local political power structure, which has cast itself as a determined foe of the new church plant. The City of Holly Springs and its mayor — DeBerry's uncle — have made finding worship and meeting space as difficult as possible.

DeBerry says Opulent Life Church has a vision for an urban ministry in downtown Holly Springs. He further says the city has attempted to erect significant barriers against the establishment of the church in the downtown area, to the extent that DeBerry has had to resort to the federal courts to tutor the city fathers

on the U.S. Constitution and federal law.

DeBerry graduated from Holly Springs High School in 1985. He spent four years in military service, attended college in Irving, Texas, and landed a job in the secular arena. "I was churched, but not saved," DeBerry says.

In 1993, DeBerry totally surrendered to the Lord. "What He captured was my desire to be married to a godly woman," DeBerry said. "I met her at Cornerstone Church in Arlington, Texas, perhaps one of the first black Southern Baptist churches in the area, which got me started in Southern Baptist life. In 2005, I yielded to the call to preach and joined the staff as the minister of mentoring and evangelism. I served at Cornerstone for five years."

DeBerry attended a family reunion in Texas in 2009 and preached at Cornerstone Church that weekend. DeBerry said his younger sister in Mississippi called later and asked if he had ever considered starting a church. That

n.p. 6

## Blythe to helm MBCB Stewardship/CP

By William H. Perkins Jr.  
Editor

Rick Blythe, 52, pastor of First Church in New Albany, has been named director of the Stewardship/CP (Cooperative Program) Promotion Department by the Executive Committee of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) in Jackson, effective June 1.

"I believe in and strongly support the Cooperative Program and missions," Blythe said. First Church in New Albany currently gives 10.5% to the Mississippi Cooperative Program.

"Rick Blythe has served in many capacities in our state convention and is keenly aware of the needs across our state," said Steve Stone, MBCB associate executive director for church growth.

Blythe has served as first vice-president and

second vice-president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. He has also served on the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board and the MBCB Executive Committee.

In addition to First Church, New Albany (2007-2013), Blythe has served as pastor of First Church, Flora (1994-2007); Liberty Church, Dallas (1991-94); New Hope Church, Tupelo (1985-1990); Center Hill Church, Pontotoc (1983-85); Parks Church, Blue Springs (1982-83); and Toccopola Church, Toccopola (1981-82).

He holds a master of divinity with Biblical languages degree ('94) from Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth, a bachelor of science degree ('89) from Baptist-affiliated Blue Mountain College in Blue Mountain, and a diploma ('78) from East Union High School in Blue Springs.

Blythe was licensed to the Gospel ministry in 1980 by New Harmony Church, Blue Springs, and ordained in 1981 by Toccopola Church.

He is married to Reta Rakestraw Blythe, and they have three adult children and two grandchildren.

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# From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

## It can (and does) happen here

*I still remember a Baptist preacher who molested me. I was twelve and thirteen years old. He stayed at our home while leading our church's revival. My parents, like everyone in the church, thought he was just great. I never told anyone what he did until I was grown and then only my wife. I'm sure he molested many other youth during his career.*

*A program that aired recently on Mississippi Public Radio quoted a Colorado law enforcement study which found the average pedophile arrested in Colorado molested around 180 different victims during their lifetime. I would assume the same holds true for Mississippi pedophiles.*

*A year or so ago I learned that this man is retired and living in Mississippi. I suffered no lasting emotional damage from his actions and forgave him long ago. I know I should have reported him to authorities at the time, or as soon as I became old enough to fully understand what he was doing, but I didn't. I see no purpose in naming him at this point. He is probably too old to hurt anyone now and whatever damage he did, has been done.*

*Certainly our churches today need to be more vigilant than were the churches of my youth.*

— Name withheld

We tend to read about such violations in faraway places and comfort ourselves with the thought that it couldn't happen here. Not in the Bible Belt. Not in Mississippi. Not in a Mississippi Baptist church. Think again. All of us would like to believe child molestation happens at a minimum among our own churches, and that's probably true — but one case is too many. It does happen in Mississippi, and it does happen in Mississippi Baptist churches that are unprepared.

The lessons of the painful Penn State scandal are many, and continue to unfold all these years later. One eminent lesson for us should be that our Baptist churches and institutions in Mississippi are at least as vulnerable — and

unprepared — as was Penn State. It doesn't have to be that way.

There are concrete steps that churches can take to shrink the risk almost to zero. First, qualified legal counsel should always be on call to deal with any number of issues that could arise. Another good start would be to acquire the publication, *Keeping Your Church Out of Court*, a step-by-step manual available for a small charge from the Pastor/Leadership Development Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

Topics covered in the manual include Church Organization and Operation; Church Liability; Decision Makers Liability and Protection; Employment Law; Taxes and Governmental Compliance; and a number of model forms such as articles of incorporation, how to craft a church constitution, volunteer worker applications, and a child abuse prevention policy checklist.

No system is perfect and no plan is flawless, but every Mississippi Baptist church should take the actions necessary to shield our precious children from this ever-growing danger in our midst. For several decades now, sexualizing children has been one of the most serious problems in American culture, and it is slinking into our once-unimpeachable institutions and churches. Penn State is discovering that the hard way.

The consequences of letting down our guard are too high. Too much is at stake, up to and including the souls of our children. Get started today.

*Editor's note: This commentary was first published in the Nov. 17, 2011 issue of The Baptist Record. For more information on acquiring a copy of *Keeping Your Church Out of Court*, contact Cathy Taylor, Pastor/Leadership Development Department, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3305, or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 305. E-mail: ctaylor@mbcb.org.*

## Jason Collins a hero? No thanks.

Sports Illustrated dropped a bombshell on the world of professional sports by announcing through its cover story that veteran National Basketball Association center Jason Collins has come out of the closet as an openly homosexual athlete. Predictably, the mainstream news media hailed Collins as a hero and a pioneer. Also predictably, his coming out has led to his being compared to Jackie Robinson, Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK), and others.

As historical comparisons go, this moment to me feels much more like the Roe v. Wade decision or the recent decision to allow women to fight in combat. In other words, there is nothing here to celebrate.

I worked as a journalist and a sports-writer for many years before entering ministry, and I continue to hold a keen interest in sports. As a minister of the Gospel, I also cast a wary eye on the culture within which God has called me to proclaim the Good News. That said, here are a few observations on the news surrounding Jason Collins.

■ **Jason Collins is not a hero.** A hero is someone who lays down his life for his platoon or his country in war, a person who rescues a baby from a burning building, a person who loves to such a degree that it drives him to lay down his life for his friends. Celebrating participation in that which God calls sin is never heroic.

■ **Jason Collins is not Jackie Robinson nor MLK.** Robinson suffered grinding persecution, his first name often a hateful slur that began with an "n." MLK paid for civil rights with his own blood. Robinson was an evangelical Christian who would likely disapprove of Collins' lifestyle choice. MLK was a preacher of God's Word, which clearly depicts homosexuality as turning the created order on its head (Romans 1:18-32).

■ **Jason Collins serves as evidence that homosexuality is, in most cases, a lifestyle choice and not a genetic orientation.** In the wake of his announcement, Collins' fiancée of eight years, a woman named Carolyn Moos, spoke to ESPN. Moos was shocked by her former fiancée's announcement. The two had planned



**Guest opinion**  
with Jeff Robinson

to marry and Moos had seen no hint of same-sex attraction in Collins.

While I certainly believe there are many, including Christians, who struggle with same-sex attraction, I also believe Collins illustrates the truth that the embrace of homosexuality is more often than not a volitional choice. We must pray for grace to resist all our sinful tendencies, and this comes only through the heart-change wrought by the Spirit of God through the Gospel of Christ.

■ **Jason Collins needs prayer and the Gospel, not enablement.** As followers of Christ, we must reject the news media's portrayal of Collins' announcement as a Shakespearean romance or a landmark moment in civil rights. Sinners need rescue from sin, not affirmation to continue in it. As those who have been transformed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we must pray that God will open Jason Collins' eyes to the reality of his sinful and destructive lifestyle and that the transforming grace of God will unshackle him from bondage to it.

Sovereign, unilateral grace is what every sinner, including us, including me, needs and it is the Good News that, by God's grace, will give the story of Jason Collins the happiest ending of all. Let us refrain from condemning Jason Collins, but let us also love him enough to pray that God will pour out His redeeming mercy on Collins and make him a trophy of amazing grace.

*Robinson is elder of preaching and pastoral vision at Philadelphia Church in Birmingham, Al. His commentary appears here courtesy of Baptist Press. Edited for length.*

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### BAPTISTS

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# Experiencing God series continues with film's release

**NASHVILLE (BP)** — A documentary about the impact of Experiencing God, a discipleship study that influenced a generation, is the first release of LifeWay Films.

Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God, by Henry Blackaby and Claude King, has touched millions of lives and thousands of churches worldwide since its release in 1990. The workbook has sold more than seven million copies, is available in more than 45 languages, and has been used in almost every denomination.

Experiencing God has spawned dozens of other books and tools including the newly released Experiencing God at Home book and curriculum; Your Church Experiencing God Together; The Man God Uses; Fresh Encounter; and the Experiencing God Musical.

Now, the documentary focuses on some of the stories that reflect Experiencing God's influence for more than two decades. LifeWay Films is a division of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention, headquartered in Nashville.

"We've heard hundreds of stories about how Experiencing God served as a catalyst for someone to make a dramatic life change," said King, LifeWay's discipleship specialist. "We pray that these three will represent well the influence Experiencing God has had over these 23 years."

Neil Hoppe, producer and host of the documentary, and director Bill Cox traveled to Lynch, Ky., Angola (La.) state penitentiary, two villages in Honduras, and Atlanta to film segments that chronicle the movement of God through the discipleship study.

The film is available May 1 at LifeWay stores and LifeWay.com. Messengers to the 2013 Southern Baptist Convention are also invited to attend a free screening of the documentary on June 11 and June 12, from noon to 1 p.m.

Subjects of the film include:

## Test of faith

Anthony Ponceti was living in Texas when he sensed God asking him to move to Miami. He was shocked to discover why: Panamanian强人Manuel Noriega had been arrested on drug trafficking charges and sent to prison in Miami. Several months later, Southern Baptist evangelists Clifton Brannon and Rudy Hernandez led the former dictator to Christ.

Ponceti was asked to disciple Noriega following his conversion. "I couldn't do it," Ponceti said. "My brother died because of drugs, and here is one of the biggest drug traffickers in the world..."

Disciple him? No. I hated him."

However, having been through Experiencing God, Ponceti knew God had invited him to be a part of His work with Noriega. This was Ponceti's crisis of faith. Would he obey?

Ponceti's heart softened and he agreed to disciple Noriega using Experiencing God.

## All in for God

Lonnie and Belinda Riley were so convinced of God's plan through Experiencing God that they moved to the small coal-min-

ing hamlet of Lynch, Ky., to begin ministering to the community. They had no plan, no support, and no income. What they did have was assurance that God wanted them there and would take care of the details.

The Rileys, now serving in Lynch as North American Mission Board missionaries, have seen the opening of a food pantry and clothes closet and have led in such ministries as home repair and school assistance.

They've also seen an influx of mission teams and monetary contributions that have helped revitalize the town.

In all this time, Lonnie Riley said, he has never asked for anything except for God to show him the need. When he sees the need, he prays and God answers.

## God moving behind bars

After Burl Cain, warden of the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola, went through Experiencing God, he had a preposterous idea. What if he took Experiencing God into the prison and offered the class to some of the inmates?

Angola houses more than 5,000 inmates and at one time was considered the most dangerous prison in America, but now, in part due to Experiencing God and the work God is doing in the prison, "50% of the inmates are Christians," reported John Robson, who heads New Orleans Seminary's extension center at Angola. His work with inmates has led to hundreds receiving Christ, hundreds studying Experiencing God, and many earning seminary extension degrees.

## Ending at beginning

The documentary ends with Henry and Marilyn Blackaby, where Experiencing God began.

Experiencing God is Blackaby's life message, the principles by which he has understood and walked with God. It was how he guided God's people as a pastor.

Blackaby, a native Canadian, was pastor of a large, affluent congregation in Southern California when he was approached by a Canadian pastor who asked him to consider returning to Canada and becoming pastor of a small, dying church in Saskatoon.

Blackaby was struck when the pastor said, "The only hope for Canada is if Canadian pastors come back home." There, in that place of difficult ministry, the principles of Experiencing God took shape in the beginning of what would become the resource that has led to countless changed lives.

The original Experiencing God Bible Study is available in Spanish as *Mi Experiencia con Dios* for adults, youth, and children in both leader and member editions. Experiencing God is also currently available in nine languages as downloads at [www.lifeway.com](http://www.lifeway.com).

LifeWay Films, producer of the Experiencing God documentary, offers films with a message of faith and hope. For more information, including information about site licenses and movie offerings, go to [www.lifeway.com/films](http://www.lifeway.com/films).

# EXPERIENCING GOD

A DOCUMENTARY



**A NEW MAN** — Documentary producer Neil Hoppe interviews an unidentified inmate in Louisiana's Angola prison telling of his life change in becoming a Christian and studying Experiencing God. The discipleship study is the focus of a new film recapping its 23 years of influence worldwide. (BP photo)

## AUTHOR'S INTENT

— Henry Blackaby says he wrote Experiencing God as a way to tell the story of how he has always related to God and how he led the churches he served. Blackaby co-authored the curriculum with Claude King. (BP photo)



What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the

# House Tops.

Matthew 10:27 NAS

May 9, 2013

HouseTops is a Baptist Record supplement produced by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's Communication Services.

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OF EDUCATION  
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**Harrisburg BC, Tupelo**

**May 21**

**Preacher:**

Jim Futral, MBCB

**FBC, Vicksburg**

**May 23**

**Preacher:**

Argile Smith, Pineview, La.

**FBC, Picayune**

**May 30**

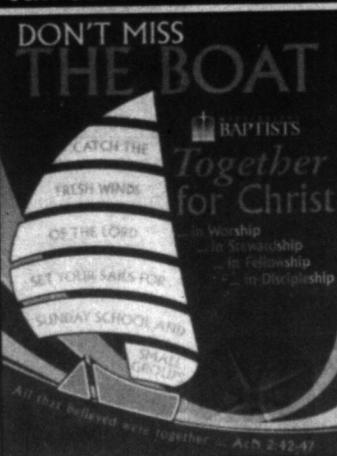
**Preacher:**

Clarence Cooper, Brandon BC

Registration: \$5 at the door or one week before the registration date to receive the gift bag!

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Ken Hall at 800.748.1651 ext. 286 or [khall@mmbc.org](mailto:khall@mmbc.org)

Bring the fall in, pour into the storehouse so that there may be food in My house. Test Me in this way, says the Lord of Hosts. See if I will not open the "floodgates" of heaven and pour out a blessing for you without measure.

-Malachi 3:8-10

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For more information contact the  
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Mississippi Baptist Convention Board  
601-292-3231

# UNLIMITED

Servants of the manifold grace of God

1 PETER 4:10

2013 Margaret Lackey Offering for State Missions

Pray this day for...

May 10 - May 23, 2013

"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience..."

*Colossians 3:12*

Pray for: **Richard and Martha\* Beal**, missionaries ministering to American Peoples in the U.S. through financial administration, church and home outreach evangelism.

Pray for a team from **FBC, Jackson**, going to Africa, May 13-28, for evangelism.

Pray for: **David and Laurie\* Bledson**, IMB missionaries ministering to American Peoples in Brazil through church and home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Donald\* and Teressa\* Bolls**, missionaries to Sub-Saharan African Peoples in the U.S. through agriculture and church/home outreach evangelism.

Pray for a team of 19 from **Longview Heights BC, Olive Branch**, going to the Ukraine, May 16-26, for medical and construction ministry.

Pray for: **Arnold\* and Margie\* Austin**, missionaries ministering to American Peoples in Peru through community outreach, church and home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for a team of nine from **Pearl River Community College** going to England, May 11-20, for church connection ministry.

Pray for: **John and Claudia\* Brown**, missionaries ministering to Sub-Saharan African Peoples in Malawi through church and home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Donald\* and Donna\* Brown**, missionaries to European Peoples in Romania through church planting and church/home outreach evangelism.

Pray for a team of 10 from **FBC, Starkville**, going to East Asia, May 21-June 3, for university and relational ministry.

Pray for: **David and Pamela\* Carlton**, missionaries to Sub-Saharan African Peoples through theological education and church/home outreach evangelism.

Pray for: **Richard\* and Wanda Clark**, IMB missionaries ministering to European Peoples in Romania through strategy coordination.

Pray for: **Kaye\* Brooks**, missionary ministering to American Peoples in Chile through church planting.

\*These International Mission Board missionaries claim Mississippi as their home state. The IMB missionaries listed in the HouseTops prayer calendar are currently active in 2-4 year terms or in career service.

## STATE LITERACY MISSIONS CONFERENCE



August 1-3, 2013

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For more information contact  
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Parents: D & L  
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7/10/07  
**Miss Natalia Nosker**  
Parents: Kieth & Susan  
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7/13/10  
**Miss Josie M.**  
Parents: C & A  
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7/17/01  
**Miss Christina Beaman**  
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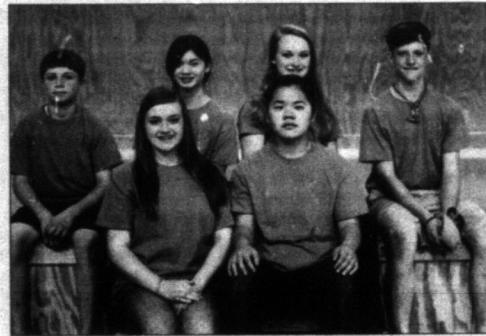
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Please include your return address on each card envelope.  
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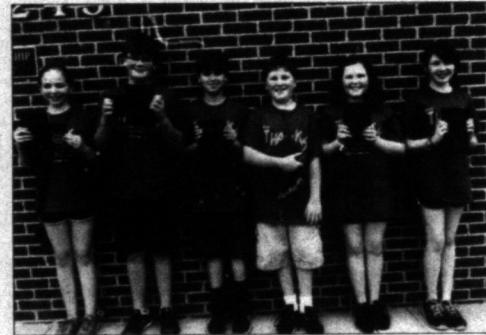


HOUSE TOPS

## Bible Drill



**ETHSAIDA CHURCH, CARROLL MONTGOMERY ASSOCIATION**, recognizes its Bible drillers. Shown are the Bible Buddies group, the children's drillers, and the student drillers.



**EAST SALEM CHURCH, LEAKESVILLE**, recognizes its Bible drillers. Front row: Shelby Csaszar, Kalyn Dial, Charliss Hicks, and Hayden West; back row: Caden Denmark, Josh Cook, Darren Beal, and Molly Eubanks.

**IMMANUEL CHURCH, GREENWOOD**, recognizes its Bible drillers. Shown are Austin Smith, Martha Clark Robertson, Carleigh Rose McCrimmon, with leader Bea Ellis.

**FIRST CHURCH, GREENWOOD**, recognizes its children's Bible drillers. Shown are Abigail Gillespie, Jon Floyd Dunn, Shane Houston Stephens, Andrew Upchurch, Kaylee Upchurch, and Emily Lake.



**EBENEZER CHURCH, LEXINGTON**, recognizes its Bible drillers. Shown are Ana-Claire Edwards, Eryca Edwards, Kameron Edwards, Kasey Edwards, and Pearce Edwards.

**FIRST CHURCH, CLEVELAND**, recognizes its youth and children's Bible drillers. Shown are Thomas Jones, Carson Childers, Hallee Pinkerton, Mary Claire Martin, Ashley Bonner, Sara Beth Mullins, and Lauren Livingston.

**UNION SEMINARY CHURCH**, Jasper County, recognizes its Bible drillers. Top row: Julie West, Tanner West, Brennen Green, and Erin Miller; bottom row: Bailey Hill, Hanna Chancellor, Karlee Green, and Landon Elkins.



**INDIAN SPRINGS CHURCH, LAUREL**, recognizes its children's Bible drillers.

**OAKHURST CHURCH, CLARKSDALE**, recognizes its Bible drillers. Photo 1, children; photo 2, students/youth.

## PLANT

*cont. from p. 1*

same weekend, his sister's husband asked her the same question without knowing she had already asked.

The following Monday afternoon, his pastor asked if he'd ever considered going back to Holly Springs to start a church. "I was floored," DeBerry says. "This was three people in the span of three days and none of the others knew... It was like a conspiracy. At that point, I had to consider it."

DeBerry came home to Holly Springs and evaluated the situation for a week. "It was like a darkness covered the city," he says, so DeBerry asked God to open doors for opportunities to meet with the appropriate people.

"I met with Jim Burke, who was the associational missions director. I met with the mayor of Holly Springs, who just happened to be my uncle. I wanted to make sure I went through pro-er channels with him, going through his office. I wanted to meet with the pastor of First Church, and I wanted to meet with someone at the state level, who at the time was Ed Deusche [director of church planting at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in Jackson].

## PRAY

*cont. from p. 1*

Generations have understood the importance of prayer, Page said in joining with diverse national voices marking the national observance established in 1952.

"Every great man or woman of Christian history prayed first, not last, first," Page said. "All of us should go to the Lord first, not last." God always offers His best in response to prayer, Page assured, referencing Paul's experience with a thorn in his flesh.

"[Paul] prayed for the removal of the thorn. He did not get removal; he got renewal. In the praying that he experienced, he experienced something far greater than he ever would have had if the thorn had been removed. Sometimes our Father knows best to say, 'I think I'm just gonna leave that in there. I'm gonna answer you with a "no," because the "no" is what's best for you.' God said, 'Listen son, I'm going to give you something better. I give you grace.'

Page's book, *Melissa: A Father's Lessons from a Daughter's Suicide*, co-authored with Lawrence Kimbrough will be released June 1.

"I told many people when our daughter died, God didn't give us more grace than we needed, but He never gave us less than we needed," Page said. "God said, 'I'm gonna

"Each one of these people was able to see me. Everyone was warm and receptive to the idea."

DeBerry and his family faced some initial personal challenges after accepting the call, including dealing with his wife's breast cancer and an automobile accident involving his family. "But I was able to come to Holly Springs debt-free. God graced me with faith that I didn't even know I had."

The DeBerry family relocated to Holly Springs. There were limited housing options but they were able to move into his cousin's house in town, as his cousin was relocating.

Opulent Life Church began on the first Sunday of February 2011. The congregation met in the Marshall Association building. "We had over 88 in Vacation Bible School that first year," DeBerry says. "We had a Friends in the Park event that first year. We do a lot of outdoor activities just because we don't have space."

Then the challenges began. "The mayor had told us that there wouldn't be any problems in us securing our own facility for worship," DeBerry notes. "We learned there was an ordinance in the city stating that all churches had to secure permission from property owners in the vicinity to have a church — basically, 60% of

give you something that every time you realize your weakness, you're going to see My strength. That's what we need in this world today. We need a dependence upon the Lord God Almighty that points to Him, not to us, that says, 'God, Your strength is what we need.'

Dove Award winners Point of Grace performed at the Nashville breakfast, sponsored by First Church and one of an

estimated 42,000 National Day of Prayer events throughout the United States.

Congress passed a resolution in 1952 calling on the president to establish the National Day of Prayer as an annual event. President Truman initiated the observance the same year, and presidents since have recognized it with proclamations. In 1988, Congress amended the law to set the first Thursday of May for its observance.

The church appealed to the city in a public forum, to no avail. The mayor and the city board seemed to be in favor with the ordinance. "We then decided to take legal action," says DeBerry.

*Next week: The battle with the City of Holly Springs for the future of Opulent Life Church reaches a critical crossroads.*

# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS FOR MAY 12, 2013

## Look for Qualified Spiritual Leaders • Titus 1:1-16

Every church needs leaders, both staff and members. Many churches simply find people who are good secular leaders and give them church positions. Remember that Jesus rejected the Rich, Young Ruler, though most of us would have made him treasurer on the spot. Godly leadership requires far more than worldly skills. Just because a man works with personnel at a large corporation doesn't mean he should serve on a church personnel committee. But how do you know whom to choose? The Bible answers that with a strict list of leadership requirements.

Paul started this letter to Titus by giving his greatest qualification—he was a bondservant of God (Titus 1:1 all Scriptures New King James). While Paul had seminary degrees and was a great church planter, he considered this his top attributes. A bondservant was a slave who could be free but chose to remain a slave. Paul was a willing servant of God. What a great start to the topic of leadership.

Paul wrote in Titus 1:1-3 of faith of God's elect. Those who know the Lord Jesus Christ and have Him in their hearts are God's elect (John 1:12). Salvation is initiated, cultivated, and activated by God's Holy Spirit. We cannot be saved on our own. It is a great act of God. Those who are saved are called the elect in the Scriptures.

The church must have leaders who are the elect, who have a relationship with Jesus Christ. The most skilled technician or leader without Christ will fail in the church. Paul instructed Titus to appoint elders in each city. He gave specific requirements for these leaders. The New Testament used three terms for leaders in a church: pastor, elder, and overseer.

The term pastor means shepherd. The term for elder means experienced leaders, and the term overseer means supervisor.

These three terms are often used interchangeably and refer to a pastor or important lay church leader. The office of deacon is often mentioned nearby (1 Timothy 3) and refers to those who serve. The term deacon means servant. Many New Testament deacons were also great leaders, such as Phillip and Stephen.

Paul gave Titus sixteen requirements and two tasks for a bishop. Twice being blameless is mentioned, which means not called into account

for anything. Husband of one wife means literally one woman man. The leader of God's church must be faithful to one wife. In addition to the requirements of having his children in submission in 1 Timothy 3, here it requires that they be not rebellious or live a notorious life.

The second time the requirement of blameless is used, it refers to handling God's money. The leader must be above reproach when handling the affairs of the church. He also must not be self-willed, or stubborn or arrogant. He must not be quick tempered, or inclined to anger. He must not be addicted to wine or alcohol. Proverbs 20:1 reads, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise." Proverbs 23:29-30, 32-33 adds, "Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has conflicts? Who has complaints? Who has wounds for no reason? Who has red eyes? Those who linger over wine, those who go looking for mixed wine, in the end it bites like a snake and stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, and you will say absurd things." No wonder God's leader must not drink. Sounds like great advice for all believers.

The leader of God's church must not be violent, or literally a bully. He must not be greedy, or fond of dishonest gain. He must be hospitable, or literally a lover of strangers. Next he must love what is good. What a great requirement, since too many leaders focus on what is wrong. He must be sober-minded or prudent. Being just means law-abiding, and being holy means devout. He must be self-disciplined. The final requirement is to be devoted to the word of God.

The two tasks Paul required of church leaders were to exhort and to convict through sound doctrine. Exhort means to cheer up or to comfort. Convict means to oppose or to contradict. The leader of God's church must both build up believers and oppose them when they stray.

Finally, it must be said that Paul required these characteristics before they became leaders, not hoping they acquire them if elected. Obey the Lord and see what He can do with godly leaders.

*Henson is pastor of Oakdale Church, Brandon.*



## Explore the Bible

with Rick Henson

affairs of the church. He also must not be self-willed, or stubborn or arrogant. He must not be quick tempered, or inclined to anger. He must not be addicted to wine or alcohol. Proverbs 20:1 reads, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise." Proverbs 23:29-30, 32-33 adds, "Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has conflicts? Who has complaints? Who has wounds for no reason? Who has red eyes? Those who linger over wine, those who go looking for mixed wine, in the end it bites like

money on groceries, tackling home-improvement projects, or making crafts.

Verse 17 ("her arms are strong" HCSB) hints that she keeps fit to have strength for her tasks. The woman also serves her community: "Her hands reach out to the poor, and she extends her hands to the needy" (vs. 20 HCSB).

All of us can be creative with the gifts, skills, time and financial resources

with which God has blessed us, enabling us to enrich the lives of our families. A compassionate heart will also seek ways to use

the home and family as a launching pad to community outreach and ministry. In True Woman 101, authors Nancy DeMoss and Mary Kassian put it this way: "Both in the physical space and in the spiritual climate of our homes, the Lord wants us to create a place where family members long to come. And not just biological family. We can reflect the hospitable heart of God by opening our hearts and homes to those outside our family – even strangers."

Lastly, the woman is godly. She possesses strength, dignity, and a confidence in facing the future (vs. 25). Full of wisdom, she guides others with her words (vs. 26). She knows what's going on in her household and makes good use of her time (vs. 27).

Verse 30 defines the source of this wife and mother's strength, faithfulness and wisdom: "a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised." (The word "fear" here means worshipful submission, reverent awe and obedient respect.) Her lifestyle earns the respect and commendation of not only her family, but that of the community as well (vs. 31).

In Joy & Strength, author Mary Wilder Tileston could be describing this type of person as she quotes J.R. Miller: "One who can be positively depended upon, who is faithful in the least things as well as in the greatest, whose life and character are true through and through, gives out a light in this world which honors Christ and blesses others."

Prayerfully consider these Scriptures and applications. What are some changes you can make that will allow God to more fully use your life and home for His glory?

*Maniscalco is a member of LeMoyne Boulevard Church, Biloxi.*

## Bible Studies for Life

with Ann Maniscalco



## Building the Home I Need • Proverbs 31:10-12, 15-20, 25-31

As I sit at my laptop, looking over this lesson's Scriptures and outline for the study that falls on Mother's Day, it is the eve of my 66th birthday. My mother died when she was this age, so this particular birthday gives me cause for pause. No matter one's age, we'd all do well to consider our own mortality and examine the kind of life we've lived, especially when it comes to our family. What kind of legacy are we putting in place for the next generation?

This second study of four from the book of Proverbs is drawn from the final chapter, with the last 21 verses extolling a "wife of noble character" (vs. 10 NIV). Although the verses probably describe a fictional woman, the lifestyle portrayed in these brief verses provides goals for all believers to pursue. With many homes falling apart these days, using these verses as a guide can help parents (and grandparents) be a godly influence, providing stability for their families.

These Scriptures can be divided into three worthy callings: to be trustworthy (vss. 10-12), to be responsible (vss. 15-20) and to be godly (vss. 25-31). Although some of what our model wife and mother engaged in was based on that day and culture, we'll examine ways the concepts are still quite relevant today.

The writer describes this woman as being of noble character, and says that such a one is "worth far more than rubies" (vs. 10 NIV). Her manner of life has earned her husband's complete trust. Her actions continually bring good things his way (vs. 12). Being able to trust a spouse is foundational in building a stable home. Last week's lesson focused on trusting the Lord with

our whole being and seeking His will (Prov. 3:5-6). The husband and wife who have made this commitment will prioritize being persons their spouse and children can rely on.

The Proverbs 31 woman is a responsible woman. Rising early, she shows a productive spirit. After preparing breakfast for the family, she tackles her "to-do" list. She might be a businesswoman or a stay-at-home mom, but in either case, she considers it her responsibility to help provide financial stability for the family. Maybe she's a savvy real estate investor (vs. 16), or an expert at saving

## Revivals & Homecomings

► Okahola Church, Purvis: Revival, May 12 -17; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Fri., 7 p.m.; Jerry Chaddick and Wayne Myers, speakers; Andrew

Ishee, The Burge Family, and Dave's Highway, music.

► Concord Church, Booneville: Homecoming

and Mother's Day program, May 12; program, 10:30 a.m., followed by lunch; Robert E. Walker, pastor.

## Just for the Record



The Women on Mission group of **WEST MARKS CHURCH, MARKS**, made wooden crosses for the Quitman County Nursing Home residents to display on their doors.



**MT. OLIVET CHURCH, SCOTT COUNTY**, honored longtime deacons W.T. Harrell and Abe Morris, shown, with a special service and dinner. Bruce Robinson, pastor.



The Children in Action of **BRANCH CHURCH, MORTON**, attended the Scott County CIA Day "Healthy & Safe - Body, Mind & Spirit" Feb. 16, hosted by North Morton Church. Shown are Vaden Latham, Haleigh Herrington, Katie Huff, and Stacie Herrington.



**EAST SALEM CHURCH, LEAKESVILLE**, honored pastor Michael McLendon with a certificate of appreciation for 10 years of service as pastor. Shown are McLendon and deacon chairman Robert Dial Jr.



**EAST PHILADELPHIA CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA**, licensed Trenton Myers to the gospel ministry. Shown are Rusty Parsons, Richard Boykin, Myers, Mike Smithey, and Mark Cloys. Myers is enrolling at Blue Mountain College in May.

### In other Church News:

► **Shivers Church, Simpson County**, is hosting The Blackwood Brothers in concert May 29, 7 p.m. Love offering.



The WMU of **ARKADELPHIA CHURCH, BAILEY**, provided lunch for the BSU at Meridian Community College. Dano Rainer, pastor.



**HOPE CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA**, held a baby dedication service Apr. 14. Shown are Allen and Karrah White with their daughter, Harper Leigh. Dennis Duvall, pastor.

### Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts

are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either e-mail, CD or DVD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lit. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape-, building-, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

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